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United for Quality Care

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Laura Nasser, PCA
Wallingford
District 1199 New England
Before the Appropriations Committee

Good evening Senator Osten, Representative Walker and members of the committee, my name is Laura Nassar and I have been a PCA for 9 years. I live in Wallingford and I love my consumer. I am a caretaker at heart and I am lucky that I get paid to do what I love. It is satisfying to care for someone else's needs. There is nothing I don't do for him. I go grocery shopping, I take him to doctor appointments, I run errands, cook, clean, and assist with preparing for the day. He is in a wheelchair full time and I take a lot of pride in the fact that I can help him. It's important for me to be there or else he would not be able to take care of himself. He can't be independent without assistance.

He even calls on me for help in off hours. I go in on off hours to help him and don't get paid for it. I do this because he needs the help. He gets nervous that he won't be able to get out of bed or eat without my help. If I were able to work more hours with him and get paid for them he wouldn't have to feel bad about calling me on off hours. I would be able to spend more time giving him the care he needs.

The lack of paid time off, health insurance and retirement frustrates and worries me. When I get sick, I can't go to the doctor. I have to treat myself. I am late on my rent every month, and have to wait until I get 2 paychecks to pay it. If I miss a paycheck it throws me off for longer than a month.

I have a very small studio for myself and I make enough money just to cover that. If there's anything that comes above, there's no other money to spare. I can retire at lunchtime on the day of my funeral because we also don't have any security for said retirement.

I am here today to ask you to protect PCA's by funding our services so we can make \$25 an hour, FINALLY receive health insurance and one day have retirement benefits to depend on.

Thank you for your time.